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WHAT IS RIGHT?

A Discourse.

7609a.94

BY

WILLIAM DENTON.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DENTON.

FOR SALE BY COLBY & RICH,

9 MONTGOMERY PLACE.

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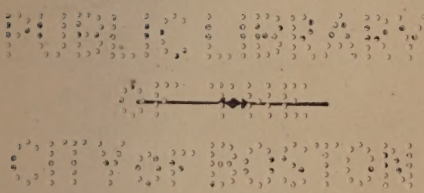

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WHAT IS RIGHT?

It is Friday, the Mussulman's holy day. The cry of the muezzin has stirred the sultry air, and thousands are flowing through the streets to the stately mosque. Let us follow. The swelling dome is over our heads, the marble pavement beneath our feet, and around us a host of bended worshippers, their hands clasped in the fervor of devotion. Listen to the voice of this kneeling supplicant by our side: "O Allah! I am weak, but thou art all-strong; strengthen me to do the right, that I may enjoy hereafter the bliss of Paradise."

As he rises from his knees, we accost him, and say, "Friend, you have been praying to Allah, or God, to strengthen you to do right: will you please to tell us what you mean by right?" — "Certainly," replies the Mussulman, with a look of sorrow for our ignorance of so simple yet important a subject. "There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet. This God has graciously revealed his will to us, by his prophet, in his holy word the Koran, — a book superior to every other book in the world. To obey the commands of

God, as given in this book, is to do right; and to disobey them is to do wrong. Cast away this precious volume, and we have no guiding star by which to regulate our wanderings: we cannot tell what is right, or what is wrong, and are the slaves of ignorance and vice."

It is Saturday, the Jewish holy day. There stands the gorgeous temple, little less beautiful than the pride of Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, so silently erected in the days of Solomon. In the pulpit behold the venerable rabbi, his white beard resting upon his breast. Around him are the sons of Israel, and above in the gallery the daughters, assembled to worship the God of their fathers. From the ark he has taken the sacred parchment; and, reverentially unrolling it, he reads a portion of the law of Moses, and then addresses the assembled congregation: "Men and brethren, children of our father Jacob, I beseech you, do right; then shall ye be blessed in your basket and in your store, in your going-out, and in your coming-in. Do right at all times, and the blessing of Jehovah out of Zion will descend and rest upon you."

As the aged rabbi descends from the pulpit, we accost him, "You have been advising your brethren to do right: will you please to tell us what you mean by right?" — "Certainly, my son," replies the rabbi. "The Almighty God, who made the heavens and the earth, has revealed himself to mankind by his servant Moses, and the prophets: they have written his holy law; and that law is contained in a book that Christians call the Old Testament (the New Testament is but a record of fables, and unworthy of cre-

dence from any rational mind). To obey God's law as thus revealed, is to do right; to violate it is to do wrong: and under heaven there is no other way by which a man can tell what is right or what is wrong, but by studying this word of Jehovah."

It is Sunday, the Christian's holy day; and from a hundred steeples floats the music of a thousand bells; and through the streets of the city pass multitudes, dressed in their gayest attire, to their respective places of worship. There stands the grand cathedral, with its cloud-reaching spire. We enter, and admire the stateliness and beauty of this "God's house."

> The organ's peal sweeps through the aisle
> In tones would make an angel smile;
> Now soft, as is a fairy strain,
> Then "groaning like a god in pain."

Slowly a head rises from behind a tasselled desk, and the minister reads, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous;" and from this text he preaches. "Friends," he exclaims, as he proceeds with his discourse, "to be happy here and hereafter, we must obey the will of God; in other words, do right. He who does the right has God for his father, Jesus for his friend, and heaven for his home; but to the wrong-doer there is misery in this world, and a fearful looking-for of fiery indignation in the next."

When the congregation is dismissed, we apprcach the minister, and inquire what he means by the word "right," which he has so frequently used in his discourse. "To do right, sir," he replies, "is to do as God commands us. He has revealed his will to us by

his word, contained in the Old and New Testaments, where we find 'truth without any mixture of error.' To obey his will, as thus revealed, is to do right: to violate that will is to do wrong; and the wrong-doer, unless he applies to the Friend of sinners for pardon, will be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

We have, then, already three rules of right,—the Mohammedan, Jewish, and Christian. "How do you know," we say to the Mohammedan, "that yours is *the* rule of right?"—"There can be no doubt of it," he replies. "Did not the angel Gabriel appear to our prophet, and cause the Koran, that holy volume written on a table, by the throne of God himself, to descend on his heart for a direction and good-tidings to the faithful? No unassisted human being could ever have written such a wonderful book, every page of which bears the impress of a hand divine. See the rapid advance of our religion, which, in a few years, overspread the world, and now comprises so large a portion of its population. Besides, I *know* that the Koran is divine, and the only rule of right. Obeying its precepts, I have fasted and prayed, with my face towards Mecca, groaning under the weight of my sins, when the prophet (glory to his name!) has taken away my guilt, revealed himself to my soul, and I have gone on my way rejoicing."

To the Jew we say, "How do you know that you are right?"—"Nothing can be more certain," replies the Jew. "God appeared to Moses, our lawgiver, on Mount Sinai, and amid thunders and lightnings delivered to him our holy law, and instituted his everlasting ordinances. Through the Red Sea he brought

our fathers by the strength of his own right arm, fed them with angels' food, and delivered their enemies into their hands. And in the day of atonement have I gone to our synagogue, bowed down with guilt, where the rabbi has interceded for us, and I have returned rejoicing in the God of my salvation; for my sins, which were heavy as a mountain, he lifted off, and removed far from me."

To the Christian we say, "Are you sure that yours is the rule of right? May you not be mistaken?" "Never," he replies: "it is impossible. The Bible is God's holy word, confirmed by miracles, prophecies, and a morality pure as the light of day. It is a sun without a spot, a fountain of eternal truth, of which he that drinks shall live forever. Besides, I *know* that it is true. Burdened with guilt, I came to the foot of the cross, as this book teaches; I cast my sins on my Saviour, and rose a new creature in Christ Jesus. I carry about with me, therefore, continually the evidence, — God's seal set to his own word."

Which of these is right? Each seems to be satisfied with his own side, says he knows he is right; and, of course, if one is right, the rest are wrong.

Suppose we take up some practical questions that are likely to come before us in daily life, and observe how these various rules of right deal with them. "Is it right to drink intoxicating drinks?" we say to the Mohammedan. "No, certainly not," he replies, turning over the leaves of the Koran, and reading to us the following passage: 'O true believers! surely wine and lots and images and divining arrows are an abomination, and of the work of Satan; therefore avoid them that ye may prosper.'

"That is sufficient," he says. "God, by his holy prophet, has forbidden wine, which includes every thing that intoxicates; and no true believer can use it."

"What do you think on that subject, Jew?"—"I cannot learn that there is any thing wrong in the moderate use of intoxicating drinks, though drunkenness is of course a great crime, and forbidden by our holy law."

"What is your opinion upon that subject?" we say to the Christian. "Wrong, sir, wrong decidedly, and contrary to the uniform tenor of God's word, from Genesis to Revelations, which expressly declares that we must touch not, taste not, handle not, the unclean thing."

"That is not so," says a gentleman standing by his side, who overhears our conversation. "Pray, what are you, sir?"—"I am a believer in the Bible: and I say that the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelations, sanctions the moderate use of intoxicating drinks; and it is only their abuse that is forbidden."—"What shall we do in this case?" I say. "Go to the Bible," replies the abstaining Christian. "To the law and to the testimony," says the little-drop brother: "if they speak not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them." So to the Bible we go; and, after turning over several of its pages, we at length come to a passage referring to the subject that we are considering: "And Noah began to be a husbandman; and he planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and was drunken." (Gen. ix. 20.) Within his tent the old man lay uncovered; while in this condition, his younger son found him, and, as it appears, made

sport of his father, who, learning the fact, on awaking, cursed his offspring most bitterly. And some pious divines see in the dark faces of the negroes, "the servile progeny of Ham," the consequence of this black curse of Noah to this day. The Bible does not, however, inform us whether Noah did right or wrong in getting drunk or in drinking; and the question is left very much as we found it.

We proceed, and our little-drop friend points significantly to the case of Lot as one having some bearing upon the question. We find, on reading, that, before the "fire-shower of ruin" descended on the doomed cities of the plain, Lot and his family fled from Sodom, his wife being turned into a statue of salt on the way; and he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave in the mountain. Having made their father drunk with wine, he committed incest with one of his daughters, and on the next evening did the same thing with the other. (Gen. xix. 30–38.) Yet not a word of condemnation is uttered, either of the man, or the liquor that was the means of placing him in such a disgraceful position: he is styled emphatically "just Lot," and a "righteous man." (2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.)

"If," says the moderate-drinking Christian, "God had not intended man to use the article, this was just the very time to forbid its use, and preach your temperance doctrine. Before you reply to my remarks," turning to his temperance brother, "let me refer you to one express passage upon the subject, that ought to set the question at rest forever. It reads thus: 'Thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after: for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink.' (Deut. xiv. 26.) Now, if a man

may spend his money for these articles, he certainly would be at liberty to drink them after so doing: it is absurd to think otherwise."

"My dear sir," replies the temperance man, "you must never build up a doctrine on an isolated passage of Scripture: after that fashion, a man may prove any thing from the Bible. You must take the whole tenor of the Scriptures, from one end to the other, and, comparing passage with passage, thus learn what the will of the Lord is. Let me refer you to some parts of the Bible having an important bearing on this question. Take, for instance, the case of Samson, recorded in the 13th chapter of Judges. The children of Israel had been in bondage to the Philistines for forty years, and the Lord sought a deliverer for them. For this purpose he needed a strong man,—for God works, you know, by instruments: he desired to put the strength of a hundred men's arms into one man's arm,—a shepherd of might, that could rescue his sheep from the jaws of the devouring lion. Now, mark how he does this: the angel of the Lord—that is, the Lord's messenger—appears to Samson's mother, and says to her, 'Thou shalt conceive and bear a son. Now, therefore, beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink.' And to her husband he says, 'She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine; neither let her drink wine nor strong drink.' Why these stringent prohibitions? Evidently that the child might be free from alcoholic taint, he being also a Nazarite from the womb to the day of his death. Thus did God accomplish his purposes by the strength of this mighty abstainer, and deliver the Israelites from the

hand of their oppressors. Nor is this all: God's word abounds with passages condemning the use of intoxicating drinks. Let us hear what Solomon, the king of wise men, says, 'Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright: at the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' (Prov. xxiii. 29.) What can be plainer than this? No abstainer could write a passage more strongly forbidding the use of intoxicating drinks. You must not even look at the tempter, lest you be poisoned by its deadly venom."

"Stop, stop!" says the moderate drinker. "I cannot allow you to rattle along in that way. You must remember it will never do to build up a doctrine on an isolated passage of Scripture; you must take the whole tenor of God's Word, from one end to the other: that's the way to arrive at truth. Solomon certainly never meant what you want to wrest from his words; for, turn to the last chapter of Proverbs and read: 'It is not for kings, O Lemuel! it is not for kings, to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.' (Prov. xxxi. 4–7.) That is the doctrine. You see it is kings and princes that are not to look on the wine; those are the men that are not to drink: but, for such men as we, there is no

such command. When our hearts are heavy, we may drink, and forget our poverty, and remember our misery no more. When you come to read the Bible understandingly, you will find this to be its tenor throughout."

"The passage that you appeal to," says his opponent, "only refers to criminals condemned to die, who drank till they were stupid, in order to drown the sense of their miseries. God's holy word is guilty of no such contradictions as you seem to make it. Allow me to refer you to the case of Daniel and the three Hebrew children, as one bearing out the glorious doctrine of abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. The children of Israel were carried off captives to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, desirous of having the most beautiful and intelligent of them instructed in the language and learning of the Chaldæans, commands the master of the eunuchs to search them out. He does so, and Daniel and the three Hebrew children are chosen. The king appoints them a certain portion of meat from his table, and of the wine that he drank; but they refuse the king's wine, and eat not his meat: but pulse had they for food, and water for drink.

> 'Yet they were fatter and far more fair
> Than any among their fellows there,
> And surpassed in learning and wisdom, too,
> Each proud Chaldæan and boastful Jew.'

"See how the blessing of God followed these temperate young men! Daniel is saved from the hungry lions; for God shut their mouths. The Hebrew children walk unhurt in the fiery furnace heated seven

times hotter than it was wont to be; not even the smell of fire upon their garments. What better evidence can we have of God's blessing crowning the temperance cause?"

"Allow me to ask you a question," says the drinking Christian. "Was not Jesus Christ a greater person than Daniel?"—"Oh, certainly! he was God Almighty, who came down from heaven."—"Very well, then, the example of Jesus must be as much more important than Daniel's as God is greater than man. Now, let us look at his example (John ii. 1–10.) There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. The tables are spread for the feast, and the guests sit down to partake: the wine is handed round, and, before the feast is over, it is all gone (not many of your kind of people there, you see). The mother of Jesus whispers to him, 'They have no wine.' There were set there six water-pots, holding, say the commentators, about a hundred and twenty gallons. Jesus says, 'Fill them with water.' They fill them to the brim. 'Now bear out to the governor of the feast.' They do so, and the governor proclaims it good wine.

> 'The conscious water saw its God,
> And, blushing, turned to generous wine.'

Had you temperance men had his power, you would have turned all the wine provided for the feast to water; but "he, the gracious Lord divine, turns simple water into wine," and by so doing places the force of his holy example on the side of those who believe in using with moderation the gifts of God's bounty. When about to leave his disciples, they took a last

supper together; at that supper they had bread and wine. Taking the cup in his hand, and offering it to them, he said, 'Drink ye all of it.' (Matt. xxvi. 27.) 'And as oft as ye do it, do it in remembrance of me.' (1 Cor. xi. 25.) And I never take a glass of wine without remembering the dying Saviour. But you temperance men, by your doctrines, cast discredit on the Saviour of the world; and, if he were here now, you would look down upon him with scorn and contempt: and how must he look upon you in the last great day? Paul, who followed in the footsteps of his Master, when writing to Timothy, one of your cold-water men, says (1 Tim. v. 23), 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.'"

After these two Christians have thus fought their way through the Bible, can any man tell on which side of the question the Bible stands? Is it not on both sides? It is a witness as ready to swear for plaintiff as defendant; a guide pointing east and west at the same time, to the great astonishment of the bewildered traveller. Right and wrong are alternately on the sides of drinking and abstaining; and a man who seeks for information in the Bible on this subject is farther off when done than when he began. And what is true in reference to the use of intoxicating drinks is equally true in reference to every other practical question that can come before us.

"Is there any day holier than another?" I say to the Mohammedan. "Most assuredly," he replies "What day is it?"—"Friday, of course: every child knows that."—"What makes Friday so much better than other days?"—"What a question, O infidel, to

ask! Friday is the day on which God ended his labors, and rested after he had made the heavens and the earth. Friday is the day on which our holy prophet (blessed be his name!) fled from Mecca to Medina; it is the day set apart by the Koran as the sabbath, and has been observed by our Church from the earliest times: the man who labors on that day is accursed of God."

I turn to the Jew. "What do you think upon that subject?" — "There is no holy day," he replies, "but Saturday. Fridays are no better than Sundays; but Saturday, the seventh day, is the sabbath of the Lord our God, on which no manner of work may be done." "What makes Saturday so much better than other days?" — "Do you not know that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested on the seventh, wherefore he blessed and hallowed it? In his law, delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave the command to observe this day as a holy day forever. (Ex. xxxi. 13–16.) And what God commands, man must do."

"What do you think about that, Christian?" — "Well, sir, of keeping Fridays and Saturdays I know nothing. They are no better than other days of the week; but Sunday is the Lord's Day: and whoever breaks the sabbath, by work or play, does it at the peril of his soul; for all sabbath-breakers shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." — "But wherein lies the peculiar sanctity of the Sunday?" "Have you not read the Bible, sir, God's holy word of truth? 'Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.'" — "Yes; but that is Saturday." — "No, it is Sunday; for the day has been changed by the resur-

rection of Jesus Christ from the dead, on the first day of the week." — "But, as he rested in the grave on Saturday, the Jewish sabbath might very well have been retained." — "The Church, sir, from the earliest times, observed the first day of the week. On that day the disciples met to break bread; and, from those earliest times to the present, the Sunday has been observed as a day of rest, and a peculiarly holy day, by all classes of Christians everywhere. John, in the Revelation, evidently refers to it when he speaks of 'the Lord's Day.'"

"Is thee not somewhat mistaken there?" says an old gentleman with a broad-brimmed hat, who had entered during our conversation. "I am a Christian, and a believer in that book to which thee has been appealing, and I find no such doctrine in it as thee sets forth. I find Jesus setting at nought the sabbath by selecting it for the performance of his most notable miracles; and, when chided by the Pharisees, he says, 'The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath day.' (Mark ii. 27.) He never commanded his followers to observe holy days, but nailed all their ceremonial observances to his cross; for they were only a shadow of good things to come. Paul says, 'One man esteemeth one day above another; another regardeth every day alike: let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' (Rom. xiv. 5.) And, writing to the Colossians, in the spirit of his Master, he says, 'Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.' (Col.

ii. 16.) Now, when a man has his body, he never troubles himself to look after his shadow; and when Jesus, the body, came in his light and glory, the Jewish types and shadows disappeared, lost in his resplendent brightness. In writing to the Galatians, Paul says, 'Ye observe days and months and times: I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.' (Gal. iv. 10–11.) There are multitudes living now that Paul would be afraid of if he were here; for they have departed from the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus, and are bowing to the idols that men have set up." So says this Quaker of the old school.

If these men are to be believed, the Bible is a guide-board pointing in three different directions, for the same place, at the same time. Saturday is the holy day, and no other; Sunday is the holy day, and must be observed; and no day is holier than another, but all are alike good. What shall the traveller do who finds these contradictory directions? Is this the road that is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein?

If we take any other practical question, we find the same difficulty in deciding what is right or wrong by any sacred book that may have been adopted as a standard. Should a man have more wives than one? The Mohammedan replies yes, at once: his prophet had, and his holy book permits polygamy. The Jew says it was allowed by God at one time, but is no longer permitted. We ask the Christian; but he stares with astonishment that we should ask him such a question. "One man and one woman united together for life is the doctrine of the Bible, taught

most explicitly throughout the pages of that blessed book; and no Christian for a moment doubts it."

"You are mistaken, sir," exclaims the Mormon: "on the contrary, polygamy is plainly taught in the Scriptures, as practised in our Church at the present time." — "How can you say so?" replies the Monogamist. "The Bible is opposed to such a doctrine from Genesis to Revelation. Just turn to the account of creation as given in Genesis, and what can be plainer than the dual relation between the sexes there declared, as established by God himself? Adam being created, and placed in Eden's flowery garden, the beasts were brought to him to name; and, as they marched before him, from the mouse to the monkey, he gave them appropriate names, but sought in vain for a companion. God, compassionating Adam in his lonely condition, cast him into a deep sleep, extracted *one* of his ribs, and of this made a woman, and brought her unto Adam. Had polygamy been right for man, then was the time for it to be made manifest. God could just as easily have taken out two or three ribs, and made as many women of them, as to take one; but, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, he makes of *one* rib *one* woman, a companion for Adam for life. By what sophistries can you set aside these explicit revelations?"

"You don't understand the Bible, sir: you are blind to the beauty of its glorious teachings. Do you not know, sir, that, through all Nature, every thing has a small beginning, however mighty it may become? First we have the germ peeping above the ground, then the sapling, and in the end the giant oak. First the spring, then the rill, the streamlet, and the river.

This is God's method of working; and it is not surprising that the statements of the Bible, God's holy word, should harmonize with it. Adam had one wife by God's appointment: that is true, and what we should reasonably expect. God could not have given him less, and, in accordance with his natural law, we could not expect him to give more. But mark, as we advance along the line of the eminent worthies whom God has chosen to honor in his sacred word, how the stream widens and deepens. Abraham, who was 'the father of the faithful, and the friend of God,' had one wife Sarah, and another Hagar. (Gen. xvi. 3.) And, when Sarah died, he took another (Keturah), so as to keep up his number, two. (Gen. xxv. 1.) Jacob, farther along the line, married two wives, his own first cousins, daughters of his Uncle Laban; and then had children by their two handmaids, making his number four. Gideon, a man of the Lord, by whom he delivered Israel, and one of Paul's cloud of witnesses, must have had at least ten wives; for the Bible informs us that he had many wives and seventy sons. (Judg. viii. 30.) Then David, the 'man after God's own heart,' the man who, we are told by God himself, never did wrong in his life but once (and that was in the matter of Uriah), takes to himself a number of wives; and, when Saul dies, the blessed Bible declares that 'God gave to him the wives of his master Saul into his bosom.' (2 Sam. xii. 8.) Do not you begin to see how naturally and beautifully this blessed system of polygamy grows? — Adam one, Abraham two, Jacob four, Gideon ten, David twenty or thirty, and, lastly, Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived or ever shall live, with his seven hundred

wives and three hundred concubines. In him humanity culminated; and from that time men went downward and backward, till Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Lord, arose and brought in the glory of the latter day. The Bible is full of beauty when properly understood, but in the hands of the wilful and ignorant is like a sharp sword, that cuts the hand of him who knows not how to wield it."

"Filthy wretches! to pervert the word of God in order to pander to your depraved appetites," says a tall, pale, overcoated, broad-brimmed-hatted gentleman, who has been listening attentively to the discussion. "Who are you?" exclaim both with one breath. "I am a Shaker, gentlemen, and a devout believer in the truths of that blessed volume that you wrest to your own destruction: and I say that the Bible teaches, by example and precept, that marriage is one of the most prolific sources of evil; and that, as God's children, we should abstain from it. Go to the garden of Eden, and what do you find? A paradise of delights. Every thing that is pleasant to the eye and useful for food is there. No earthquake heaves the ground, no volcano opens its fiery mouth; but the angel of peace holds dominion over the world. The lion and the tiger, the lamb and the kid, lie side by side together, and there is nothing to hurt or destroy. But mark the change! Adam, dissatisfied, desires a helpmeet; and no sooner does she come than misery comes as her companion. When woman came, the Devil came; and then came death and all our woe. The fair face of Nature became seamed with yawning chasms, earthquakes shook the world, and volcanoes poured out desolating floods; the lion fleshed his teeth in the innocent lamb, and the

tiger, seizing the kid, rent it in pieces; the soul of man was dyed by sin as black as hell, and nothing but the blood of God could wash it out. Abraham has two wives; but their quarrels imbitter his existence: and, for the sake of peace, he is compelled to turn one of them with her child out of doors into the wilderness. Jacob the shepherd, keeping the sheep of his uncle Laban, is a lovely character, dreaming of heaven and angels, and communing with God; but with his marriage commences his misery. His wives quarrel; his children are robbers and murderers, and even conspire against the life of their brother, till the old man, in the anguish of his heart, exclaims, 'Ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.' David's wives vex his righteous soul, and Bathsheba leads him to the commission of that terrible crime that blots his whole life. His beloved son makes war against his father, and is slain; David, in his soul's agony, exclaiming, 'O Absalom! my son, my son! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son!' Even Solomon, the wisest man, is dragged down from the throne of his glory by his wives and concubines, who turned his heart from the Lord; and he gives us the result of his wide experience in the mournful words, 'A man in a thousand have I found, but a woman in a thousand have I not found.' 'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity, and vexation of spirit.' Come down to the New Testament; and Jesus our Lord and Master, who set us an example that we should tread in his steps, was never married; and he says, (oh that mankind would read and understand!) 'He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in

his heart.' Paul, who trod in the footsteps of his divine Master, was no husband to any woman, no father to any child, and desired others to follow him, as he followed Jesus. When John the revelator had those sublime visions in the Isle of Patmos, he saw a hundred and forty-four thousand around the throne of God, who were singing day and night unto him. John inquires who these favored few are, who thus approach the throne, and on whom God's smile rests continually; and the answer is,— mark it,—'These are they that were not defiled with women.' (Rev. xvi. 4.) In other words, they were Shakers; and we shall bask in the sunshine of God's glory, when filthy sinners like you will be compelled to stand afar off."

So argue Bible believers; and no wonder, while they follow such a guide, who stands at life's cross-roads, with as many hands as a Hindoo god; his fingers directing to every point of the compass, while he exclaims, "*That* is the way to life!"

Does it point slavery-ward? "No such thing," said the North, and shouted itself hoarse in repeating, "'Do unto another as ye would that another should do unto you.' 'Call no man master; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.' 'Woe unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.' 'The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.'" "How plain!" said the antislavery minister. "None but those blinded by avarice can help seeing how God frowns upon the damnable traffic in the souls of human beings, and how his Word is laid like an axe at the root of this tree of misery."

"The Almighty Maker of the universe," said the Southern slaveholder, "is ever the same. He never commands in one age what he forbids in another, nor blesses at one time what he curses and denounces at other times; and he has said in his Word, 'Both thy bondmen and bondmaids which thou shalt have shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids, and ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: they shall be your bondmen forever.' (Lev. xxv. 44–46.) None of your antislavery and abolition in the Bible, but there we have God's charter, signed, sealed, and delivered; our rights guaranteed by the great *I Am* forever. Abraham the friend of God, Jacob his intimate companion, and David his beloved, all held slaves; and Jesus, finding the institution of slavery everywhere through Palestine, never said one word against its continuance. Paul not only recognizes slavery, but regulates it, when he says, 'Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.' Masters are to give unto their servants what is just and equal. No word of denunciation of the institution, nothing of abolition; but the right of the master is recognized, and the duty of the servant prescribed."

On this, as on all practical questions, the Bible is double-tongued, and is therefore no true moral guide.

What, then, shall the traveller do? Is there no pole-star in the heavens, fixed immovably, while around the shifting lights revolve? Is man left to tread the wilderness in midnight darkness, with noth-

ing to dispel the gloom around his tortuous pathway but the flash of a meteor, or the uncertain light of the *ignis fatuis?* There is a pole-star for the mariner, a highway for the traveller, with daylight to guide him, and men need not drive on shoals, flounder in bogs, or move slowly in darkness with fear and trembling. THAT IS RIGHT WHICH IS FOR HUMANITY'S BENEFIT; THAT IS WRONG WHICH IS OPPOSED TO THE WELFARE OF THE HUMAN RACE. It is not presumable that we can add to the happiness or diminish the enjoyment of God; but our deeds constantly influence ourselves and our fellows for good and evil. To know what actions are productive of good or evil, we need to use our judgment, aided by all the light that science can bestow.

Let us try by this rule the various questions that have come before us. Is it right or wrong to use intoxicating drinks? The basis of all intoxicating drinks is alcohol: it is this in them that makes them intoxicating. Rum and brandy contain a large quantity, while beer and hard cider contain but little. What is this alcohol? we inquire of science; and the answer is, an acrid poison. Then intoxicating liquors are poisonous in proportion to the alcohol that they contain, and as such are at war with the healthy operations of the human system. The man in health who uses them violates the law that governs his physical organism; and no amount of prayer or Bible reading can absolve the sinner from the consequences of his deeds. The headache that admonishes the moderate drinker, the diseased body that the drunkard carries with him continually, are much more effectual texts than "Thus saith the Lord," in Bible or in Koran.

Texts are they written in an ever-living language, understood by men of every tongue.

Intoxicating drinks are injurious to those who use them; at war with the health of the body and strength of the mind; stimulating to physical and mental activity for a time, it is true, but using the strength of to-morrow to-day, and demanding for its use a fearful interest, that soon bankrupts the foolish borrower. Hence we apply our rule, and decide that it is not right to use intoxicating drinks. "But your rule," says an objector, "leads no more to unanimity of opinion than the Bible. Men who do not make the Bible their guide differ in opinion on this subject as much as those who do." To those who are governed by it, it does. Multitudes never investigate the subject: some who do have a strong appetite for intoxicating drinks that hinders clear vision. As people become intelligent, opinion on this subject becomes more unanimous, and there is no doubt, that, eventually, the use of these drinks will be abandoned.

Is one day holier than another? The conflicting testimony of so-called holy books can never give a reasonable answer to this question; but Nature's ample and consistent page contains a satisfactory reply. I work for six or eight hours daily on my farm, and note carefully the condition of my system on the various days of the week. I do this for a whole year; and I find that labor agrees with my physical and mental constitution on every day of the week. Fridays are no more consecrated to rest by Nature than Saturdays; Sundays than Mondays. The corn I plant on Sunday grows as well as that planted on Monday; the rains refuse not to fall upon it, nor the sun to

shine upon it. On every day the grass grows, the water flows, gayly blows the breeze, the sap climbs up the trees. Sunday puts no brake on the world's wheels; but the sound of the rushing sphere comes humming into the church on Sunday, as into the synagogue on Saturday. Nature knows no red-letter days.

The man who invented the sabbath evidently supposed the world to be flat. When the sun went down, it was night all over the world; and, when he rose, day was everywhere. Not otherwise could all the people of the world observe the same portion of time. At six o'clock on Sunday evening, the Christian minister in this country gives out his text, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," and solemnly denounces the violators of the holy day who do their own work, and obey not the divine record; and at the very same time his Christian brethren in China are swinging their axes, driving their planes, and wielding their hammers, for it is Monday morning with them. If we would but climb the mountain, sun ourselves in the daylight, and let the wind blow the cobwebs out of our eyes, we might read this truthful Scripture, "All days are thine, man: use them for thy good." No tyrannical monarch sits in state, watching with scowling brow the little boys who play on Sunday, striking one with lightning, and drowning another.

There is a time of rest marked by Nature, which none can disregard with impunity. It is when the sun sinks, and the curtain of night is drawn around the world; when

> "The daisies have shut up their sleepy red eyes,
> And the bees and the birds are at rest."

Then sleep, like an angel, closes the laborer's eyes, and his soul wanders off into heaven. Abstain from sleep to-night, and to-morrow you feel faint and languid. Try it to-morrow night, and the pain you will suffer will teach you the necessity of obeying the laws that Nature makes. It is said that Napoleon's soldiers, in the retreat from Moscow, slept on the march. So well does Nature provide for obedience to her commands, that disobedience is almost impossible. This is the only sabbath that Nature imposes: all others are of man's manufacture.

Indiscriminate intercourse between the sexes produces the foulest diseases, and its mental and moral effects are most disastrous. Polygamy debases woman, and degrades and brutalizes man. If one man appropriates to himself a dozen wives, he is a tyrant, and they his slaves. If many men were to do it, many of their brethren would be robbed of the happiness that flows from congenial companionship with woman. Monogamy is evidently the law of Nature; and when two congenial souls are truly united theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What are the effects of slavery? Does it elevate mankind? Is it a blessing to the race? Its very defenders acknowledge that it is a curse. In consequence of it, comes to the white man idleness, that eats away his manhood like a canker-worm; cruelty, that enthrones the beast in his soul; and fear, that holds a dagger before his eyes continually: to the colored man, a prison-house for his mind, from which the light of knowledge is carefully excluded; a stagnation of soul that breeds pestilence and crime. It is accursed, let it die, says Nature; and die it will.

For want of this principle by which to distinguish right from wrong, the world is most sadly cursed. We have artificial virtues and artificial vices without number. Men are trained to believe that certain actions are right, nay, imperative, that have no tendency to benefit the doer or his neighbors; while they are trained to carefully abstain from doing what would be of decided benefit.

The faculty of conscience is blind, and never enables a man to know whether actions are right or wrong: it only induces us to do that which the judgment has decided to be right. The Hindoo devotee holds his closed hand above his head in a fixed position till the nails grow through his hand, and the muscles of his arm become so rigid that it is impossible to bend it. The torture thus inflicted upon the body he is taught to believe is so much virtue placed to the account of his soul; and his conscience assists him in bearing the pain. The Mohammedan dervise dances and howls by the hour, not because his dancing and howling benefit either himself or others, but to propitiate God, and obtain favors from him. We need not travel far to find instances of a somewhat similar kind in what we are pleased to call an "enlightened land."

Here is a baby held in the arms of a gentleman, who utters some words over it, as if for a charm, and then sprinkles water in its face till it cries; all parties looking on with the greatest seriousness.

It is winter, and cold in the extreme. A hole has been cut in the ice, and in the water stands another gentleman, a crowd of lookers-on surrounding the spot, attracted by the singular spectacle. He dips

overhead twenty or thirty people, two-thirds of them women or girls; and with stiffened clothes and chattering teeth they make their way to some neighboring house. Who is benefited? The water is no purer, the people no cleaner, the gentleman no warmer, the world no wiser.

A hundred people are gathered in a Christian place of worship. It is communion-day. The minister discourses about a young man who was put to death more than eighteen centuries ago, who, he says, was God. He then hands to them cups filled with wine, and plates containing pieces of bread, and tells them to eat and drink; assuring them, as they do, that they are eating the flesh and drinking the blood of this young man who died so long ago, though the bread was made by the baker, and the wine is generally some villanous compound concocted by the wine-merchant.

Artificial virtues that are no virtues, that make no soul wiser or better, purer or happier, take the place of manliness, intelligence, and use. Human beings meet by thousands, and cry to deaf gods; they build sumptuous temples, and employ men to retail to them ancient fables, while they sternly reject living and important facts.

Artificial vices go side by side with artificial virtues. Your hired man is a Catholic. It is Friday, and the church says no meat shall be eaten. A round of beef is on the table; Patrick has been laboring hard, and hunger has shortened his memory; cut after cut disappears, till the thought flashes like lightning into his mind, — it is Friday! Down drop knife and fork, and remorse of conscience supplies the re-

mainder of the meal. On Sunday he is off to confessional. He kneels, "O father, I have committed a great sin." — "What is it, my son?" says the priest, who thinks of nothing less than murder. "I ate some beef on Friday." The priest prescribes a light penance, and away goes Patrick rejoicing, while he rolls over a large quid of tobacco, and chews with double force for joy. It is all right to chew tobacco; but to eat meat on Friday — what a deadly sin!

A company of Methodists have met in the basement of the church at class-meeting. The leader asks them one by one how it is with their souls, till he arrives at a poor widow, left with four young children and a heritage of woe. She tells with trembling voice of her many shortcomings: she does the things she ought not to do, and leaves undone the things she ought to do; she begs an interest in their prayers, that she may grieve her God no more by wandering from him, but move steadily on to Zion with her face thitherward. What has this poor soul done? What are the sins that she has committed, the remembrance of which overwhelms her like a flood? Fatigued with hard labor for herself and darlings, she slept without first praying, and thought of her children in the morning before she thought of her God. She heard a dull, prosy sermon last Sunday, and went to sleep (the best possible thing she could do under the circumstances); and, bearing the burden of such artificial sins as these, she goes mourning all her days.

Thousands are made miserable by their violation of commands that they were never under any obligation to obey, and, on the other hand, are ruined by

disobeying what Nature commands, of which they are generally ignorant.

Let us study the effect of our actions upon ourselves and our neighbors, and what conduces to true permanent happiness let us perform. Here are the ignorant; let us enlighten them by all the means in our power. Here are our neighbors, suffering, dying; let us assist and relieve them. Man needs our assistance, and all that we can give. Blessed is he that applies his life to this work! In this world he has peace and joy, and in the world to come the happiness that legitimately springs from well-doing, and that cannot be separated from it.

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